



ASPIRA



*AN INVESTMENT
IN LATINO
YOUTH*

About ASPIRA

The ASPIRA Association, Inc. is the only national nonprofit organization devoted solely to serving Puerto Rican and other Latino youth through leadership development and education. ASPIRA takes its name from the Spanish verb *aspirar*, "to aspire."

Since 1961, ASPIRA has pursued its mission of empowering the Latino community through the development of its youth. All of ASPIRA's goals and activities spring from one basic belief: Puerto Ricans and Latinos have the collective potential to move their community forward.

ASPIRA looks at Latino youth and sees the potential there; leaders waiting to emerge. With statewide offices in six states and Puerto Rico and an overall budget of over \$16 million per year, ASPIRA's 350 full-time staff members and over 1,000 volunteers serve 25,000 youth and their families each year to develop that potential. These are our *Aspirantes*—those youth who will become educated, committed leaders for the community's future benefit. Since its founding, ASPIRA has provided over 250,000 youth with the educational enrichment, guidance, motivation and leadership skills they need to remain in school, go on to college and contribute to their community. Over 90% of our *Aspirantes* go on to higher education. Moreover, most mainland Puerto Rican leaders today—in business, education, government and other professions—are a product of the encouragement ASPIRA offered during their adolescence.



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Dear Friend,

Over the past 36 years, ASPIRA has helped over 250,000 Puerto Rican and Latino youth and their families to become leaders in their community. We would like to share with you excerpts from a letter from one of our Aspirantes. Cynthia came to ASPIRA from an inner city neighborhood known for having the lowest reading scores in the nation. She was a Puerto Rican student whose parents had completed the eighth grade and had received high school equivalency diplomas.

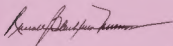
Here is what she had to say about being an Aspirante: "I joined ASPIRA during high school because it was the only ticket out. My childhood dream was to become a doctor and through ASPIRA I would find the only people who believed this was possible."

Cynthia realized her dream, but almost 10 years after we received that letter, there is still a problem in Cynthia's neighborhood—and in other inner city neighborhoods nationwide, with respect to educational achievement of Latino youth. At ASPIRA, we know there is still a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done to prepare these youth for the challenges they face at home, at school and in their careers.

When we receive letters like this one, we are reassured that ASPIRA's positive approach is the key to the future for many Latino youth. We believe in the youth we serve, and we help them to believe in themselves and their communities. The *ASPIRA Process* of leadership development teaches students to expect more and get more out of themselves and others.

This brochure illustrates how ASPIRA helps Puerto Rican and Latino youth and their families through the wide variety of programs we conduct in six states and Puerto Rico. We can not advance our mission of empowering these youth without the support of the many friends who have inspired us, kept us strong, and guided our efforts. As you read the ASPIRA Brochure, keep in mind the commitment of ASPIRA's thousands of friends. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Ronald Blackburn-Moreno
National Executive Director



Raquel Ortiz
Chair,
National Board
of Directors

The "ASPIRA Process"

ASPIRA has developed a unique and highly successful intervention model. The **ASPIRA Process** consciously articulates the positive, placing emphasis on developing the potential of *Aspirantes* rather than on trying to overcome their perceived weaknesses.

The **ASPIRA Process** of leadership development is grounded in decades of research about youth. It teaches youth to become **aware** of their current situation, their environment and their community, to **analyze** its causes and consequences, and to take **action** for change in their personal lives and in their community. It builds pride in our Latino cultural background as a stimulus for self-assertion and motivation to succeed. ASPIRA brings together students, parents, schools, and community members to promote educational success, youth leadership, and as a means of developing our communities.

ASPIRA also works with foundations, corporations, and the government to improve educational opportunities for young Latinos.

The ASPIRA Association

The ASPIRA Association is a collaboration of independent statewide ASPIRA community-based organizations that currently have offices in the Latino communities in Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Puerto Rico. Each Associate operates a variety of programs that grow out of the specific conditions and needs of their own communities. However, they share a common mission: Promoting the development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community through the education and leadership development of its youth. The **ASPIRA Process** is at the center of all ASPIRA activities. The ASPIRA Clubs, organized in over 500 schools and forming ASPIRA Club Federations in major cities, are the core of ASPIRA's organization. ASPIRA Associates, across the country, are the core of ASPIRA's organization. ASPIRA Associates, across the country, are the core of ASPIRA's organization. ASPIRA Associates, across the country, are the core of ASPIRA's organization. ASPIRA Associates, across the country, are the core of ASPIRA's organization.

ASPIRA Initiatives

Youth Leadership and Community Service

The ASPIRA Clubs Federation is a national network of



ASPIRA National Fellows

school-based clubs which help students develop leadership skills, improve academic skills, learn to work together, improve self-esteem through increased awareness and pride in their cultural background and gain a better understanding of their community. The ASPIRA Clubs also develop a host of community service and advocacy activities to further enhance their knowledge of, and commitment to, their community. In each major city where ASPIRA operates, the ASPIRA Club form the ASPIRA Clubs Federation.

The **ASPIRA Public Policy Leadership Program** provides 90 high school students with the opportunity to study public policy and work with local leaders in community service internships for a full year. Selected students participate in a National Fellowship Program, spending the summer in Washington, D.C., as National Fellows. They work with national policy makers in Congress, federal agencies and national organizations. ASPIRA's youth leadership and Public Policy institutes and programs in Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, reach hundreds more students locally each year.

The **ASPIRA Corps**, (ASPIRA/Multicultural Community Service Program) supports 130 full-time volunteers in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Newark, New Jersey, New York City and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who spend a year tutoring and mentoring middle and high school students, and working to bring families together in after-school activities. In New York, 70 ASPIRA Corps members collaborate on AmeriCorps/Project Safe and Sound to create a violence-free environment in the South Bronx. ASPIRA Corps members receive a stipend and funds for college for their service.

The **ASPIRA Alumni Association** is creating an active network of over 210,000 ASPIRA alumni to expand and enrich community-based, self-help activities, promote mentoring programs and volunteering and to support ASPIRA.

Educational Access and Careers

The **Talent Search Program**, a core ASPIRA program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, targets first generation college-bound students who demonstrate a potential to succeed. Talent Search counselors provide information to these talented students on opportunities in higher education, assist with applications for admissions and financial aid, as well as assist with ACT and SAT preparation.

The **ASPIRA National Health Careers Program** has for 25 years provided over 1,000 high school and college students each year with the counseling, motivation, and academic support to determine their future health professions.

The ASPIRA Process is fully realized in the **ASPIRA schools**. The **Antonia Pantoja Alternative High School** in Chicago, ASPIRA

"I'm a very big supporter of ASPIRA. It's great for young people to get a sense of positive identity. Just the name alone, ASPIRA, means to aspire. I think that's an inspiration."

Asia Akatsu,
Administrator, U.S. Small Business
Administration

of Pontiac's **Academi Middle School** and **Academi South Middle School**, and ASPIRA of New York's **Beacon Schools (BRAM and BEAM TQD)** through the knowledge ASPIRA has gained over 25 years with a strong, full-time, academic program to provide a comprehensive education for students who have dropped out of school or are deemed to be at high risk. Over 98% of ASPIRA school students remain in school. Other ASPIRA Associates are in the process of creating middle and high schools in their cities.

The **ASPIRA Mathematics/Science Academy (MSA Academy)** improves the math and science skills of Latino middle school students with hands-on activities, mentors, and field trips, as well as academic assistance. The initiative includes an after-school enrichment program, a summer enrichment program, and an alternative school curriculum.

ASPIRA of Pennsylvania has developed the highly successful **Abriendo Caminos** Community Learning Center which serves over 500 adults each year, with graduate equivalency degree programs, vocational training and English as a second language services. Through a variety of after school and summer activities, ASPIRA works with students born kindergarten through college by providing counseling, job and internship placements, homework help, field trips, computer workshops, cultural enrichment and math and science tutoring. The ASPIRA of Connecticut

LightHouse and its Market Research Lab programs are a great example of these initiatives.

In Puerto Rico, ASPIRA's **Upward Bound Program** assists participants to complete secondary education and to undertake and complete post-secondary education programs. Its **Head Start** program is one of the largest national direct head start programs in the country, providing a variety of education and enrichment programs for children and parents.

Community Mobilization for Educational Excellence

The **ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence (APEX)** program trains parents to become informed advocates who work together to improve education in their communities. Trained parents then mobilize and train other parents to join their efforts, spreading the parents' impact to approximately 965 parents over four years. APEX graduates in Chicago have formed the **ASPIRA Parents Federation** to promote education reform and parent advocacy. Close to 50 APEX graduates have been elected to local school councils and other school bodies in Chicago.

The **Teachers, Organizations, and Parents for Students (TOPS) Partnership Project** brings together teachers, corporate volunteers and parents as a team to help individual students achieve their personal and academic goals. Teams integrate parent involvement activities with child-centered counseling and mentoring.

By targeting youth at risk of dropping out of traditional education institutions, ASPIRA has designed a variety of **intervention programs**, including tutoring and mentoring programs designed to work with families to keep children in school and to increase their achievement. In addition, ASPIRA administers programs which work with high school drop outs, using a culturally sensitive approach to teaching in all curriculum areas to ensure Graduate Equivalency Degrees. In Chicago, the school, community and local school councils have collaborated at the **Roberto Clemente Community Academy** to boost attendance rates and increase the number of seniors applying

to college. An ASPIRA of New Jersey, **The Getting Ahead The Education Way (GATEWAY)** program is working with the city schools across the state to help students make the transition from middle school to high school.

ASPIRA Research and Advocacy

ASPIRA has been at the forefront of the effort to focus attention on the often dismal educational conditions and exceedingly high dropout rates of Latino students and to offer positive solutions. The **Mobilization for Equity** provides information to community members around the country on public policy issues related to the equity of educational services and education reform. It helps the Latino community understand student rights and promotes effective advocacy strategies for change. ASPIRA is recognized as a major force in Latino youth advocacy on local and national levels. ASPIRA is also strong in its collaborative work with other national organizations, such as the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, the organization that brings together the 30 major national Latino organizations in the country. The ASPIRA Associates advocate both in major cities and state-wide, before local school boards, councils and city assemblies, and before state legislatures, to reform policy-makers of the issues that affect the education of Latino youth. The National Office is a visible advocate at the national level, influencing Congress and federal agencies.



Antonia Pantoja, founder of ASPIRA and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom

ASPIRA TIMELINE

1961

ASPIRA is established by the Puerto Rican Hispanic Leadership Forum as a nonprofit, bilingual counseling agency to assist Puerto Rican youth through career counseling.

1965

ASPIRA becomes incorporated, a declared tax exempt, and establishes its own board of directors.

1966

Bilingual Education Act becomes law. ASPIRA of America is created with a \$750,000 grant from the Ford Foundation.

1969

ASPIRA offices are established in Newark, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Juan.

1970

Health Careers Program launched by ASPIRA of New York.

1972

Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund files a class action suit against the Board of Education of New York City on behalf of 15 school children, ASPIRA, and other organizations.

1974

The Board of Education of NYC signs the ASPIRA Consent Decree, agreeing to provide bilingual education for all limited English-proficient students in city schools.

1976

ASPIRA of America study, **Social Mobility in Educational Attainment Among Puerto Ricans in the U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 1970**.

1980

ASPIRA of America creates the Center for Educational Equity in Washington, D.C. as its division for research and advocacy.

1981

ASPIRA of Florida splits ASPIRA of Pennsylvania begins three year study on dropout and delinquency rates among Puerto Rican youth.

1983

ASPIRA of New York study, **Racial and Cultural High School Dropout Rates in New York City**.

1984

ASPIRA of Illinois Chicago Dropout Study released and ASPIRA, Coca-Cola Support Services Project (Project A.C.C.E.S.S.) initiated. ASPIRA of Puerto Rico examines the dropout rate in a report titled **La problemática educativa de los estudiantes del sistema escolar: problemas y proyecciones**.

1985

ASPIRA of America changes its name to the ASPIRA Association, establishes a National Office and the Institute for Policy Research in Washington, D.C., and begins research for the **High-Care High School Dropout Study**.

1986

The first group of Aspirantes come to Washington as National Fellows in the ASPIRA Public Policy Leadership Program Summer Internship.

1988

The Hispanic Community Mobilization for Dropout Prevention begins a national parent-involvement program.

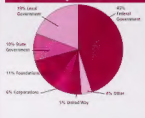
1991

ASPIRA of Connecticut is officially recognized as an ASPIRA affiliate.

1996

ASPIRA holds its first National Conference, **Latino as a Cultural Issue: Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders** in Washington, D.C. Antonia Pantoja, founder of ASPIRA, is awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

1996 BUDGET
Total Budget \$16.1 Million



The ASPIRA Institute for Policy Research conducts nationally recognized educational research and policy research as well as analysis on issues affecting the Puerto Rican and greater Latino community. ASPIRA disseminates the results to the community through widely-distributed reports, pilot projects, electronic networks, and collaborations with other organizations.

The ASPIRA Association collaborates with over 200 national and local community and professional organizations across the country. One of our main collaborations is with **Educational Testing Service**, a broad based 10 year partnership through which ASPIRA and ETS share a host of educational resources and expertise.

Legislative advocacy is carried out according to regulations governing 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt organizations and is always nonpartisan.

ASPIRA Communications

ASPIRA's quarterly national newsletter, *ASPIRA News*, provides local and national leaders with information on ASPIRA's programs, education issues, research, policy, and commentary on current issues. ASPIRA's opinions are widely reported in major newspapers and staff are frequently invited to speak at national conferences, meetings, and on radio and television programs. ASPIRA's training manuals, booklets, reports, and fact sheets receive extensive coverage and are distributed throughout the country. Further information on ASPIRA's publications can be found in the brochure, *What's Available from ASPIRA*.

ASPIRA Looks to the Future

As we rapidly approach the 21st century, the education issues that ASPIRA has effectively dealt with for so long are becoming ever more critical. ASPIRA's growth has been impressive since its beginning as a parent-initiated community organization in 1961, but there is always more to do. The next several years will see ASPIRA enhancing and extending its program assistance to better serve the rapidly-growing Latino community.

ASPIRA List of Funders

<p>Allied Signal The Allstate Foundation American Express The Amoco Foundation Anheuser-Busch Companies AT & T AT & T of Puerto Rico Bally Park Place Casino J. Balsara Bus Company Bank of America Broward County School Board Bell Atlantic BellSouth Bristol-Myers Squibb Broward Children's Services Administration Brimbury Company, Inc. Sam & Louise Campe Foundation Carnegie Corporation of New York CHASE Bank Chase Manhattan Foundation Chesbrough-Ponds Chicago Board of Education Chicago Community Trust Chrysler Corporation City National Bank of New Jersey City of Jersey City, Community Development Block Grant City of Miami CDBG City of Miami Beach CDBG City of Newark, Community Development Block Grant City of Patterson, Department of Human Services City of Philadelphia City of West Palm Beach Civic Committee of Chicago The Coca-Cola Company</p>	<p>Con Edison Max & Dora Cooper Family Foundation Corns Brewing Company Corstate Bank The Corporation for National Service County of Mercer, Department of Human Services CPC International Inc. Dade County Public Schools Dean Witter Deluxe Corporation Foundation DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund R. Eaton Educational Testing Service Exxon Corporation The Everett Foundation Fairfield Bank Florida Department of Children and Families Florida Department of Community Affairs Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Florida Department of Education Florida Governor's Office of Drug Free Schools The Ford Foundation Ford Motor Company Foundation Collaborative Gannett General Electric Corporation Greater Philadelphia Trust Harper-Collins Publishers Charles Hayden Foundation Health Partners HIP Health Plan of Florida</p>	<p>Hispanic Housing The Hitachi Foundation Hoffman-La Roche The Houston Endowment Howmedica Hyde and Watson Foundation IBM International Foundation Illinois Arts Council Illinois Department of Education Illinois Department of Human Services Illinois Department of Public Aid Illinois Department of Public Health J.C. Penney Company Fund Lexington Capital Power & Light Johnson & Johnson Keystone Mercy Kraft Foods, Inc. MacArthur Foundation Matsushita Electric Corporation MCI McMaster Carr Supply Company Merck Merck Family Foundation Merck, Sharp, Dohane Mercy Health Plan of New Jersey Metro-Dade Human Resources Metro-Dade Justice System Support Metro-Dade Parks and Recreation Mr. Charles E. Merrill, Jr. Merrill Lynch The Miami Herald</p>	<p>Miller Brewing Company Jay R. Monroe Memorial Foundation Nabisco National Education Association National Science Foundation Needless Kids Fund New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services, Title XX Block Grant Northern Trust Bank Novartis Pharmaceuticals Co. NYNEX Gordon Ohl Trust Oxford Health Plan Pacificare Palm Beach Children's Services Council Pathmark Stores, Inc. The William Penn Foundation PepsiCo Pepsi-Cola Company Pfizer Inc. The Philadelphia Foundation Philadelphia Fund Pillsbury-Rudy Division Pioneer Bank Pitney Bowes PNC Bank Polk Brothers Foundation Prudential Foundation Public Service Energy & Gas Quaker Oats Foundation Rockwell Foundation Sara Lee Foundation</p>	<p>Sony Electronics Sony USA Foundation, Inc. St. Paul Federal Bank Summit Bank Sun-Sentinel Supermarkets General Corporation Texaco, Inc. The Travelers Foundation Time Warner Toyota Motor Sales USA Tricon College The Turrell Fund United Parcel Service United Way of Dade County United Way Crusade of Mercy United Way of Camden United Way of Essex and West Hudson The UPS Foundation The U.S. Department of Education The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services The U.S. Department of Justice US Sprint The Edward W. and Stella C. Van Houten Memorial Fund, First Union Bank Trustee Victoria Foundation The Warner-Lambert Foundation WCBS TV WGN Radio 720 W.P. & H.B. White Foundation Xerox Foundation</p>
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"Our youth are our future, and ASPIRA has continually supported young people, year after year, and encouraged them to continue. It's a wonderful organization. Especially now... when young people give up on college because it costs too much, we really need organizations like this and we need to support them."

Jimmy Smits
Aspirante
Emmy Award-winning Actor

ASPIRA Association

National Office
1444 I Street, NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
202-835-3600
fax 202-835-3613
aspira1@aol.com
http://www.inccorp.com/aspira

ASPIRA of Connecticut, Inc.
1600 State Street
Bridgeport, CT 06605
203-336-5762
fax 203-366-5803

ASPIRA of Florida, Inc.
3650 N. Miami Avenue
Miami, FL 33137
305-576-1512
fax 305-576-0810

ASPIRA, Inc., of Illinois
2435 N. Western Avenue
Chicago, IL 60647
773-252-0970
fax 773-252-0994

ASPIRA, Inc., of New Jersey
390 Broad Street, 3rd Floor
Newark, NJ 07104
201-484-7554
fax 201-484-0184

ASPIRA of New York, Inc.
470 Seventh Avenue
3rd Floor
New York, NY 10018
212-564-6880
fax 212-564-7152

ASPIRA, Inc., of Pennsylvania
2725 North Sixth Street
Philadelphia, PA 19133
215-229-1226
fax 215-229-0966

ASPIRA, Inc. de Puerto Rico
Apartado 29132
Estación 65 de Infantería
Río Piedras, PR 00929
787-758-1385
fax 787-257-2725

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As required by law, the following information is disclosed regarding federally-funded programs managed by the ASPIRA National Office mentioned in this brochure: ASPIRA/AmeriCorps: funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, grant #94ADNDC043, \$663,513 federal funds (80%), \$170,984 non-federal (20%); ASPIRA National Health Careers Program: 97% funded by the Health Careers Opportunity Program, US Public Health Service, grant #1-D18-MB02170-03, 3% funded by Bristol-Myers Squibb for a total of: \$282,078; ASPIRA TOPS Partnership Project: funded by School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program, US Dept. of Education, grant #5201D13019-05, \$44,672 federal funds (78%), \$12,500 non-federal (22%); ASPIRA Math and Science Program (MAS) National Science Foundation grant #9353813, (100%), \$76,650 for 1993-95 program period.